

AN

## EPISTLE

To the Reverend

Mr. *BROOKE*,

Upon his Late

## DEFENCE

OF THE

Primitive Fathers.



L O N D O N:

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TO THE  
Reverend Mr. *BROOKE*.

*S I R,*



*S* I am a perfect Stranger to your Person, and know but little of your Character, except from THE LATE TREATISE, with which you have obliged the World, I am willing to supply that Defect, and remove, as far as possible, that Misfortune, by introducing myself in this Manner to your Knowledge, by this early Congratulation of you upon the Defence of the *primitive Writers*, and by giving you the best Specimen I can of the Sincerity of it, in my Resolution to co-operate with you in one



of the PRINCIPAL POINTS you have in view.

Leaving it therefore to others to do Justice *to your Merit*, and to yourself the Consciousness of meaning well to Religion, and being consistent in the Defence of it; which will be a constant Fund of Satisfaction to you, if the other should fail; I shall not here bestow any other Encomiums (*though many other are due*) on your *late Performance*, than by insisting upon *one peculiar Excellence* in it, which I intend to copy.

I have long observed with Concern the dark and intricate Method of proceeding in *those* who are like to be the *chief Managers* in this Dispute; and what little Probability there is of *ever* arriving at the true State of Things through such Difficulties and Perplexities, as are daily thrown upon it. But in *You*, I think, I see a Rectitude and Sincerity of Heart, and in *your Work* a Plainness and Simplicity of Method very singular and extraordinary in these Times of Refinement, and in some measure approaching to the rare Examples of those happier Ages which belong to your Subject. You have shewn the Danger of Dr. M——n's Hypothesis *so manifestly*, described its Connexion with the FALL OF CHRISTIANITY *so minutely*, and detected the *Hypocrisy or Inconsistency* of his Oppo-  
sers



fers *so openly*, that you have at least afforded us of the Laity one Instance of a *Priest*, in whom *no Priestcraft* is left.

I don't know whether I ought not to ask Pardon of a Man of *your Character* for such a Compliment on *your Sincerity*, tho' ever so well intended, and whether your Respect to *Ecclesiastical Antiquity*, and the Dignity of *your Order* will not make you offended with any Reflexions on *your Brethren*, though they end in *your own Credit*; I promise however not to hazard any thing of this Nature for the future: and proceed directly to the Business in hand.

It is very probable, that I should have given myself *no Trouble* in this Matter, if what you have already said about it, had been in *English* and not in *Latin*; but as I thought it requisite that the *English Reader* should have the Benefit of *your Observations*, since *it is to him* that this Dispute is principally directed, I shall shew in as short and plain a Manner as I can the MANIFEST DANGER of Dr. M——n's Plan to CHRISTIANITY, and the Weakness of *that Writer's* Conduct, in whatever Light he be considered, either as *Deist* or *Christian*; I will moreover shew the Inconsistency of *such* among his Opposers, as say that the APOSTOLIC MIRACLES ARE SAFE, though THOSE OF THE FATHERS ARE IMPOSTURES: I will expose the double Dealing

ing of *such on both Sides*, as fluctuate in their Principles, and I will unfold the dark and concealed Designs both of *Orthodox and Heterodox Art*.

The Sum and Substance of *Dr. M—n's Scheme*, as given us in *his own Words*, is as follows :

“ There is no sufficient Reason to believe from the Testimony of Antiquity, that ANY MIRACULOUS POWERS *did ever* actually subsist in ANY AGE OF THE CHURCH *after the Times of the Apostles* \*.

And immediately afterwards he farther explains *the Meaning* of THIS ASSERTION as follows :

“ But this will be the proper Business of my LARGER WORK above mention'd ; in which I shall endeavour to evince, by particular Facts and Testimonies, what *this general View of the Question*, and the Reflexions naturally arising from it, previously dispose us to suspect, that *the pretended Miracles of the primitive Church* were ALL MERE FICTIONS ; which the *pious and zealous Fathers*, partly from a *weak Credulity*, and partly from *Reasons of Policy* ; believing *some perhaps* to be true, and knowing *all of them to be useful*, were induced to espouse and propagate

\* Introductory Discourse to a larger Work designed hereafter to be published, &c. p. 41.

“ pagate for the Sake of a righteous  
“ Cause. \*

Here we see *at one View*, and without any Exception or Reserve, what great Execution this LARGER WORK is to bring about; or to speak in a Style more suitable to the Importance of the Occasion, what *immense Destruction* is threatened to *Antiquity* from *this impending Storm*, and what little Probability there is even of ONE MIRACLE being saved from the *universal Shipwreck* of the *primitive Times*.

But we may depend upon it, the Ruin will not stop *here*, you have already shewn by Reasons *never to be confuted*, that it must still extend itself to the APOSTOLIC AGE; nay, and that even THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST have so exact a Conformity with those of his Disciples, and those of his Disciples with THOSE OF THE FATHERS, that ALL OF THEM must take THEIR FATE, whether good or bad, together.

For what is it, I pray you, that can make a Difference in *their Lot*? and what refined or Polemic Skill can so nicely separate Things that have but one common Life, so as to destroy *one* and save the *other*? Were the Apostles plain and ingenuous Men, that abhorred the Thoughts of imposing upon their Fellow-Creatures? SO WERE THE FA-

\* Id. *ibid*;

*This Conformity absolutely shewn by both. & by the whole Tenor of the text.*

*There is no life*

*no one had the Guide of a constant & the other were men by protest no more*



FATHERS. WERE THE FORMER *duely and properly acquainted* with the State of things, *they relate?* SO WERE THE LATTER. WERE THE ONE said to be endued with *miraculous Powers themselves*, so as to make it impossible for them to *err in their Accounts?* SO WERE THE OTHER. In short, did THE ONE DYE, or profess themselves *ready to dye* for the Truth of what they assert? THE OTHER were *not at all* behind them, either in *their Resolution* to suffer MARTYRDOM, or in *their actually suffering it*. Neither is there a *less* Similitude between the *Relaters* of these Facts, than the *Nature and End* of these Facts themselves.

Were the MIRACLES OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES wrought for the Confirmation of a Religion, which brought *Life and Immortality to Light*? SO WERE THOSE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS. Were the FORMER *absolutely necessary* in the Foundation of the

Gospel? SO WERE THE LATTER IN ITS PRO-  
PAGATION. Did THE ONE consist in a great  
Measure of *such Works*, as were proper to  
demolish *the Power of Satan*, and dispossess  
him of *his Empire over Mankind*? So DID

THE OTHER. Did THE ONE answer the *Beneficence of God*, as well as the *Circumstances of the Prophecy in Isaiah*, that “ all manner of Diseases should be cured; that the Lame should leap as an Hart, and that the Tongue of the Dumb should sing ?

“sing?” SO DID THE OTHER. Did THE ONE sometimes proceed *farther than this*, even to the *raising of the Dead* from a State of Putrefaction? SO DID THE OTHER. In short, had THE ONE nothing *absurd or ridiculous* in their Circumstances, nothing that could induce *us to judge them either unworthy of God, or unsuitable to the End* for which they were wrought? THIS we may venture to pronounce without any Hesitation ON THE OTHER.

But we have not yet done with the Parallel between the MIRACLES OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS, and those of CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES, either in regard to their Nature <sup>*the Miracles of Foundation rest upon the testimony of a*</sup> or Evidence. Do the MIRACLES OF THE APOSTLES rest *almost entirely* upon the Authority of *one Writer, St. Luke*? The MIRACLES OF THE FATHERS rest upon the Authority of *many*. Are THOSE OF CHRIST founded chiefly upon the Testimony of *two Writers, St. Matthew and St. John*? THOSE OF THE PRIMITIVE TIMES are founded upon *more*. Are *these two Writers* more unexceptionable Witnesses, than *any other two* amongst THE FIRST CHRISTIANS? On what account? *Their Integrity*? The contrary has just now been shewn. Their Knowledge of the *Facts*? The Evidence of *Eye-Sight* was common to *all*. The Circumstances of the Miracles *themselves*? I defy the most consummate Art to shew any In-  
*inspired*  
*uninspired*  
B feriority

seriority in *this Respect* on the Part of the *primitive Christians*.

You must take notice, Sir, that in *this Comparison*, I stick close to *my Guide*, and will not follow you or *any one else* beyond the PUREST AGES; and in *this Respect* give me Leave to say, that I have *not hitherto* done my Argument *Justice*. *St. Matthew* and *St. John* were not always *Eye-witnesses* of the MIRACLES OF OUR SAVIOUR, nor *St. Luke* of those OF THE APOSTLES. We know from *infallible Authority* that the Disciples of Christ frequently attended on the Business of their Profession after they became *Converts* to the Gospel. And as to *St. Luke*, the *very Nature* of his History renders *such* a clear degree of Evidence impossible. Add to this, that the *Apostles* are in the present Case supposed to relate *only such* Facts as were done by *others*; in some of which (as in the *Ejection of Devils*, which is *here* principally meant) there was greater Room for *Collusion*, than when they were done by *themselves*. Whereas the FATHERS proclaim with *ONE VOICE*, that they were not only EYE-WITNESSES of this Sort of Miracles, but likewise brought them about *themselves* in the Face of the WHOLE WORLD.

I do not mean by this to cast any Reflexion on the Evidence of the GOSPEL-MIRACLES. It is almost impossible for *any* Evidence



Evidence upon the whole to be more forcible ; but if *any* can be, it is *that* which we are considering. And because there is yet *one thing* of the last Consequence on *this* Head, which seems so much to give the Superiority to the GOSPEL-MIRACLES, that it would not only be *unfair* to pass it over ; but, as I have no other Concern in *this* Dispute than to see it settled upon it's true Bottom, it would be imprudent also.

The Superiority I mean is in some of those *grand* and *solemn* Prodigies, such as were seen and heard by great Multitudes of People *at once*, and of consequence were better calculated to remove *all* Suspicions of Imposture, than those which were either done before a *select* Company, or by reason of the *Crowd*, or other Circumstances could be looked into but by *few* ; of *this* kind were the DARKNESS at the PASSION \*, and the VOICE which St. *John* mentions as proceeding FROM HEAVEN in the Hearing of the *Jewish People* †.

But how are *these* superior to some of the *same* *astonishing* kind in ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY ? Was the DARKNESS AT THE PASSION *better* suited to *alarm* the World than THE EARTHQUAKE AND IRRUPTIONS OF FIRE AT JERUSALEM ? Is it attested by *better* Evidence ? Do the Testimonies of the

B 2

FOUR

\* Matt. *ch.* xxvii.† John. *ch.* xii. *v.* 28.

*The Sup.<sup>ty</sup> is  
by in it's Inspi-  
with making  
between Divi-*

FOUR APOSTLES outweigh the UNITED TESTIMONIES of the HISTORIANS of THIS TIME? If they do, is not the Defect in *the latter* abundantly supply'd by the CONCURRENCE OF ENEMIES? Is not the *full Variety* of Circumstances in *Marcellinus* about *this Point* vastly superior to the *ambiguous ones* of *Pblegon* about the *other*? And is not the Confession of \* *Julian*, the Person principally concerned to dispute it, a supernumerary Evidence of the last consequence to the Truth of *this great Event*? The VOICE FROM HEAVEN before the *whole Jewish People* was indeed *surprising*, but not *more than THAT*, which happened before a GREAT MULTITUDE OF HEATHENS at the MARTYRDOM of POLYCARP. The Use and Intent of them *both* seem to have been the *same*. They are *equally* recorded by Persons who *heard* it; only the Relation of ONE is delivered down to us in the Name of a † COLLECTIVE BODY OF MEN, the Relation of the OTHER by the Authority of a SINGLE WRITER.

This therefore is the FIRST DANGER arising from *this Scheme* to CHRISTIANITY; in the Management of which I must intreat the *Doctor* to be *particularly* cautious, since

\* *Julian*. Epist. Fragm.

† Epist. *Smyrn.* apud *Euseb.* Hist. Eccl. Acta *Poly-*  
*carp* apud *Ruinart.*

since it will require *all his Art* to distinguish it away. Proceed we now to THE SECOND.

If the FATHERS are not to be BELIEVED in their Relation of ANY OF THE MIRACLES they SO CONFIDENTLY appeal'd to; it *must* be, because they were CREDULOUS, because they were IMPOSTORS, or because they were BOTH. The *Doctor*, being resolved to make *sure Work*, \* charges them with the *last*; and says that " these Relations were partly owing to their *Belief*, partly to their *Policy*; which, by the Train of Things *at present* in Agitation, may rightly be called CRAFT.

Well then, we have now got to a *rising* Ground as well as the *Doctor*, from which indeed we have not *so fair* and *pleasant* a View of Things; but from whence we may see *at least*, if THIS SCHEME takes place, that the FATHERS are *absolutely* disqualified from being WITNESSES TO ANY POINT WHATSOEVER, wherein the HONOUR OF THEIR RELIGION was concerned. For if any two Things *can* make a Man unfit to bear his Testimony to Truth, it *must* be the WEAKNESS OF HIS HEAD, and the BADNESS OF HIS HEART; and the *poor Fathers* had BOTH.

Yet *malignant* as this Conjunction of *these two bad* Qualities may be, it seems we have

\* Introductory Discourse, &c. p. 41.



have *nothing else* to depend upon for the VERY EXISTENCE OF OUR RELIGION ; and the CANON OF SCRIPTURE ITSELF is derived to us from *this Source*, than which nothing can be more *corrupt*. For if *such* Witnesses are not to be believed (as certainly they are not) in regard to Facts which appeared before *them*, and which they could not easily be deceived in ; how are they to be believed in regard to the GENUINENESS OF CERTAIN BOOKS, which it required *Penetration* to judge of, *Industry* to examine, and *Fidelity* to transmit.

But the Fact, in regard to the Genuineness of these Books was, the \* *Doctor* says, *Matter of Notoriety*. *Notoriety* ? How does it appear ? From the TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS ? We have just now *seen what that was*. From their *Inability* to impose these Books upon us, though they were ever *so well* inclined ? But how is *this Inability* made out ? Were not THESE WRITERS as *much* or *more* concerned about the FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY, as THE SUPERSTRUCTURE ? And if *so*, would not they naturally have taken the *same Pains* to give false Accounts of ONE, as the OTHER ? Was it not as much *their Interest*, that the MIRACLES OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES should be *true* as THEIR OWN ? And would not they of

Confe-

\* Introd. Discourse, &c. p. ult.

Consequence endeavour *as much* to transmit *these Books* to Posterity, which recorded the *former*, as such *Writings* of *their own*, as recorded *the latter*? In short, you may sift this Matter as you please, you will find *no greater* Dissimilitude in the Nature of the two Sorts of Testimonies *here*, than we did in the Nature of the two Sorts of Miracles *before*. The SECOND DANGER TO CHRISTIANITY is of the *same Nature* with the FIRST; and I must call upon the *learned Doctor* to distinguish *once more*.

I have taken it for granted, in the Course of *this Treatise*, that the *exterminating Plan* of the Doctor did not admit of ANY ONE MIRACLE since the APOSTOLIC TIMES; and this Conclusion I thought as well the Thread of his *general Reasoning*, as the *particular Expressions* before selected, authorized me to make. But you I see have taken a *different Rout*, and have supposed that the Doctor has *no Design* of excluding *such extraordinary Miracles*, as were brought to pass by the *superiour Being*, without the *Agency of Christians*. Upon *what Grounds* you make this Concession, or whether you make it *justly*, I know not. It is however but of little Concern either Way, since as you *rightly observe*, there seems to be *no Reason* whatever for *any sort of supernatural Operations* by one of these Means rather

rather than *another*. So that why the supreme Being should condescend to put *his great Designs* in Execution sometimes by the *Agency of natural Things*, and never by the *Agency of his faithful Servants*, is a Distinction that the *Doctor* has yet to make. Whatever he may think of his *own Sagacity*, or however he may *plume* himself upon his *former Exploits*, these Difficulties upon his Hands, though *they* have ever been so accustomed to *Slaughter*, will find him *Work enough*; and it may be *no great Instance of Foresight to predict*, that before he settles *them* to the Satisfaction of *his Countrymen*, his Life will be *worn out* in their Service. There seems nothing therefore left for him to do, but either to *with-hold* his *LARGER WORK* from a *thankless and ill-judging World*, or send it out *defenceless and exposed*, with *only the conscious Satisfaction* of having done *his Duty*, of having left a *Palladium* for the *eternal Security* of the *Protestant Cause*; and having left it too with a *Generosity* never to be *parallel'd*, to a Set of *Stupid and ungrateful Men*, who neither acknowledge it as a *Favour*, nor understand its *Use*.

And now having shewn in *common* with *you* the *MANIFEST DANGER* that is like to arise from *THIS SCHEME TO CHRISTIANITY*; it  
may



may not easily be imagined by an *impartial* Judge, that we were *Associates* in *Deism*, and pleading the *Cause* of *Infidelity*. But what will not *Despair* attempt, or *Artifice* bring about? The *Doctor* has already brought *this Charge* against a *nameless* Writer, who has not been *half so explicit* on *this Subject* as *ourselves*.

“ Upon my first and hasty Perusal, says  
 “ the Doctor, of these *anonymous* *Observations*, I could not help considering  
 “ them as the Work of some *sly Unbeliever*,  
 “ who under the Mask of Zeal for the  
 “ Honour of the Gospel, and a Pretence of  
 “ Fears and Jealousies from the Freedom  
 “ of the *Introductory Discourse*, was craftily pointing out every *Topic* and *Passage* of it, which by *any Art or Force*  
 “ could be strained to the Advantage of  
 “ the *Infidel-Cause*.”

But as *this* is only an *inconsiderable* Specimen of the *many unfair Arts*, which the *Doctor* has made use of in the Management of *this Subject*; and as *ONE PRINCIPAL* Intent of *THIS WORK* was to display them *at large*, let us proceed to the *rest*. That which has been *just now* intimated, is of *much greater* Consequence, and is *much more finely* imagined; by which the *Doctor* hopes to make the *simple* Reader believe, that the *Plan* which he has proposed, is in Favour of the *REFORMED RELIGION*, and that if

there was to be *any* Dispute about it, it should naturally be between PROTESTANTS and CATHOLICKS.

“ I found myself, says † the Doctor, “ *particularly* excited to *this Task* by what “ I had *occasionally* observed and heard of “ the *late Growth* of POPERY in this King- “ dom, and the *great Number* of POPISH “ BOOKS which have been *printed* and *dis-* “ *persed* amongst us, within these *few* “ Years; in which *their Writers* make “ much use of *that Prejudice* in Favour of “ PRIMITIVE ANTIQUITY, which prevails “ even in THIS PROTESTANT COUNTRY, “ towards drawing *weak People* into their “ Cause, and shewing their *Worship* to be “ the *best*, because it is *most conformable* to “ that ANTIENT PATTERN. But the *most* “ *powerful* of all Arguments, and what “ gains them the *most Profelytes*, is their “ *confident* Attestation of MIRACLES, as “ subsisting *still* in their Church, and the “ clear Succession of them, which they “ deduce through *all History*, from the “ APOSTLES TIMES down to THEIR OWN.

It is an Observation of the *Naturalists*, that *every Creature* is sensible of it's own *Strength*; that even the *most stupid* naturally urge what is *most useful* in their Defence; that even “ Bulls aim their Horns,

“ and

† Introduct. Disc. &c. p. 4.

“ and Asses lift their Heels.” It is likewise another Observation *as true*, that Men are for the *most part* more than ordinarily *quick* and *clear-sighted* in all *those Points* where their Interest is at Stake; and of consequence it would be next to impossible that a Race of the *most learned* and *sagacious* Men, that perhaps *any Age* has produced, should be so *strangely infatuated*, as not to know their *strong Holds* in a Matter, which they’ve *principally* studied, and which is their *principal Concern*.

But as it may be thought *as weak* in me *seriously* to confute *this Sort of Artifice*, as it is in *the Doctor* to *make use of it*, and to mention only *such things* may be sufficient, I proceed in *my Design*. ANOTHER TRICK, which the *Doctor* has *invented* to *varnish* over his *Scheme*, is drawing a SYSTEM OF PRIMITIVE THEOLOGY from the Writings of a *certain Visionary*, whose *Head* is not more *disorder’d* by *Fanaticism* than his *Heart* corrupted by *Disaffection*. By which means he hopes to *exhibit* such an *unlovely Picture* of the SENTIMENTS AND PRACTICES OF ANTIQUITY, as to make *all his Readers* as *averse* to the Testimony of the PRIMITIVE WRITERS, as they are to THEIR REASONINGS. As if in reality there was *any Connexion* between these *vide Extreams*; and as if it did not *daily* and *hourly* hap-



pen that we *despise* a MAN'S ARGUING, when we *believe* his EYE-SIGHT.

Whoever will see this *strange Artifice* drawn out at large, he must consult the DOCTOR'S PREFACE ITSELF. I but just draw up the *Veil*, because I hasten to take notice of *another Piece of Cunning* still more *disfingenuous* and *mean*. The Doctor, it seems, has got *fortunately* into his Hands a *Dealer* in *Antiquity* and *Rebellion*, and is resolved to make *the most* of him. The Use he puts him to, is much of the *same Sort* with that, which he put the UNFORTUNATE FOURTH CENTURY to before. For as then, in the Doctor's *Scale of Reasoning*, the MIRACLES OF THE FOURTH CENTURY *tainted* them of the THIRD, THE THIRD *tainted* THE SECOND, and THE SECOND the FIRST; so at present a *Fondness* for the FATHERS *taints* a Man with POPERY, POPERY *taints* him with JACOBITISM, and JACOBITISM *taints* him with REBELLION.

But that no *Complaint of Misrepresentation* may be made, let us hear the Doctor himself.

" I could \* never consider THOSE PLANS  
 " of PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY, when pub-  
 " lished by PROTESTANTS in any other  
 " Light, than as PRELIMINARY ARTICLES,  
 " offered to the ROMISH CHURCH, as the  
 " GROUND

\* Remarks on two Pamphlets, &c. Preface, p. 37.

“ GROUND of a TREATY of PEACE and RE-  
 “ CONCILIATION; in which the *few* re-  
 “ maining Points of *Difference* might ea-  
 “ sily be accommodated. Which *vain*  
 “ Project of an UNION with ROME, has  
 “ ever been the *fond Wish* of ALL THOSE  
 “ ZEALOTS OF OUR CHURCH, who draw  
 “ their *religious Principles* from PRIMITIVE  
 “ ANTIQUITY.”

Again, speaking of the *Character* of the  
*Author* just mentioned; “ He \* is a PRO-  
 “ TESTANT PRIEST, yet a SEPARATIST from  
 “ the *Communion* of OUR PROTESTANT  
 “ CHURCH, *disaffected* to its PRESENT CON-  
 “ STITUTION, and consequently to the  
 “ PRESENT GOVERNMENT, on which its  
 “ *Security* depends. This is the REAL CHA-  
 “ RACTER, which *his Writings* suggest;  
 “ *this*, the NATURAL COURSE OF HIS PRIN-  
 “ CIPLES, when *frankly avowed* and *pushed*  
 “ to THEIR FULL LENGTH; PRINCIPLES,  
 “ which among PROTESTANTS will ever  
 “ produce the *worst Fruits*, when they take  
 “ root in the *best Minds*, will corrupt the  
 “ *purest Heart*, make even the *Sincerity* of  
 “ *Men dangerous* to SOCIETY, and trans-  
 “ form a PIOUS ZEALOUS CHRISTIAN into an  
 “ ENEMY TO HIS COUNTRY. Yet THESE are  
 “ the PRINCIPLES which the CHAPMANS,  
 “ the BERRIMANS, the STEBBINGS, are so  
 zealously

“ *zealously* asserting and recommending  
 “ to THIS PROTESTANT KINGDOM.”

If I had not been by this Time *sufficiently* acquainted with the *Doctor's Manner*, I should have looked with *Horror* on my own Condition, and trembled at the *Gulf* which was *laid open* before me. I should likewise have been in some Pain for *You*; but that, exclusive of the *Abatements* that must be made on the Account just mention'd, I had receiv'd *some Information* of the present State of Things in *your College*, which makes me venture to *congratulate* the *Youth*, who are under *your Care*, on their having a *Director*, who can defend *his Religion* upon its *true Bottom*, the AUTHORITY OF THE FATHERS, and yet is *well affected* to the PRESENT CONSTITUTION.

I make no doubt likewise but that there are yet *Thousands* left amongst *us*, in whom *these Qualities* are united, as well as in *You*; that THIS UNION of them is a *Solecism* only in the DOCTOR'S CREED; and that even the CHAPMANS, the BERRIMANS, and the STEBBINGS, can answer for themselves on *this Head*. And though I do not think *indeed* that the *famous Charge* of the *first* of *these Writers* did either by its *Strength*, its *Spirit*, or its *Perspicuity*, (as the \* *Author himself* would persuade us) provoke the  
 the

\* Remarks on the Jesuit-Cabal, p. 54.



the *Envy* or *Resentment* of *Dr. M——n*; yet still that he is *provoked* by something is *too plain* to be denied. And I think we may venture to pronounce, without any *Want* of *Charity*, that the *unmanly Reflexion* on the DEFENDERS OF ECCLESIASTICAL ANTIQUITY, is the *unfortunate Issue* of a *Conjunction* of two *much more natural Qualities* than those he has imputed to his *Adversaries*, which are *disingenuous Artifice* and *Spleen*. N

It would swell this Treatise to a *much larger Size* than I intended, if I was to take notice of *every Piece* of *Cunning* dispersed through the *little* that the Doctor has yet thought fit to advance upon *this Subject*. I shall therefore mention but *one more*, which is his insisting on the *Disagreement* of *English Divines* about the *precise Æra* of the *Continuance* of *Miracles* in the *Church*, as a \* BETRAYING of the PROTESTANT CAUSE, by transferring *these miraculous Powers*, the *pretended Ensigns* of *Truth* and *Orthodoxy* into the *Hands* of *their Enemies*. }

To which it may be sufficient only to say, that if from the *Division* of the *Defenders* of these *Miracles* amongst *themselves*, he thinks to prove the *Invalidity* of THEM ALL, we may easily prove the same of

\* *Introduct. Disc. &c. p. 11.*

of CHRISTIANITY ITSELF, or indeed of ANY OTHER TRUTH IN THE WORLD.

This *last* Consideration has put me into a *Train* of *grave thinking*, and made me earnest enough to *expostulate* with the Doctor on *another thing* I proposed at first to consider, which is the *Weakness* of his *present Attempt*, in whatever Light he be considered, either as *Deist* or *Christian*. And as he has yet advanced nothing that can hinder us from believing him to be *the latter*, let us consider him *as such*.

The Doctor then on *this Supposition* must know that he is engaged in a DESIGN *altogether opposite* to the SENTIMENTS and JUDGMENTS of the WISEST CHRISTIANS in the *World*, as well as the BEST-DISPOSED PROTESTANTS in *this Kingdom*. And tho' he be ever *so sincere* himself in his Professions, yet *many Divisions* and *Commo-tions* must happen among Men, *many Dis-tractions* must arise in the Minds of the most zealous Professours of the GOSPEL, before THIS SYSTEM can take place. When I say the Doctor must know this, I take it for granted, as well from his *general Ac-quaintance* with Mankind, as his more *dis-agreable Experience* of the *Effects* of Zeal, and his *frequent Engagements* in *religious Quarrels*. But if we were not sure of *this*, the above mentioned *Arts*, which we see he has made use of to *soften* the Minds of Men, and  
dispose

*dispose* them for the Reception of HIS SCHEME, sufficiently demonstrate *how much* he stood in need of them.

What is here said, is on a *Supposition* that CHRISTIANITY will receive NO DETRIMENT from THIS SYSTEM. But if as Men generally think, and is above most incontestably shewn, its VERY RUIN is connected with it; surely no good Christian would propagate or encourage it. For tho' the Doctor may be persuaded, that he is doing no Harm himself; yet he must be sure from what has been already said, that others will not be of that Opinion; of which Number I who am a Layman, and no ways prejudiced in ECCLESIASTICAL DISPUTES, am an unfortunate Example. I see with prophetic Eyes the DOWNFALL OF CHRISTIANITY in every Heart, where THIS SYSTEM takes place; and though I do not at present think, that I can be trick'd out of my FAITH, by the Slight of MEN or DEVILS, yet no one can answer for himself, when the Age is universally Apostate, and all are carried down with the Stream of Example and prevailing Fashion.

But now if we consider the Doctor as personating a DEIST, (which for Argument sake only I suppose) he should reflect, that it is not easy to introduce a better Religion than the present; and that he is hazarding the PEACE OF SOCIETY, and the SAFETY



OF THE CONSTITUTION for a Trifle, For what is it now, that *can* be just Matter of Offence to a *sincere Unbeliever*? The Baal of CHURCH POWER is reduced; the Spirit of the CLERGY is *broken*; their former *Narrow-mindedness* is enlarged; PERSECUTION is *abolished*; DAMNATORY CLAUSES are *exploded*; MYSTERIES are *not enforced*; CREEDS are left to our *own Interpretation*; ARTICLES are *not roughly imposed*; FAITH is *not absurdly exalted*; SUCH POLITICAL NOTIONS as were drawn from *religious Systems*, and *disturbed* the PEACE of the COMMUNITY, are now *universally* given up; and the DIVINE RIGHT of KINGS, and the ABSOLUTE NECESSITY of *obeying them*, are now look'd upon by all as *destructive* TO SOCIETY, and *scandalous* to the CLERGY. In short, though a Man *seeks* Occasion for *Dissatisfaction*, he *must* own that *such* MORALITY is preached, and *such* excellent Parts of CHRISTIANITY are for the *most part* defended, as cannot well give those *any material* Reason to complain, who are *zealous Advocates* for the RELIGION of NATURE. So that there is *too much* Reason to doubt that this *cutting up* of *Superstition* will with the same Stroke wound SOCIETY to its *very Vitals*.

I am not sure that in *this last Train* of Reflexions there is not *something* of POLICY, that will not be relished by a Writer of  
of

of your *primitive Turn*. I need not however make *any Apology* for it to the *Doctor*, who has *too ample* a Portion of it *himself* to be offended with *only this small Specimen* of it in *another*. Much *less* still need I make *any* to his OPPOSERS, who are in *such close Conjunction* with the Doctor in *this Point*, though they are at Variance with him *every where else*, that one would rather be tempted to believe *them all* a Sett of ANCIENT PHILOSOPHERS disputing for Victory in the Science of *Guile and Dissimulation*, than CHRISTIANS endued with that *Dove-like Simplicity and Singleness of Heart*, which *their Master* commended.

Thus for instance the AUTHOR of the OBSERVATIONS on the INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE assures his Readers, that it is \* a WORK of NO USE or SIGNIFICANCY to us, either as CHRISTIANS or PROTESTANTS; and that he *cannot see* that THIS † QUESTION hath *any thing* to do with the DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY at large against INFIDELS, or as it is *generally* received in PROTESTANT CHURCHES against those of the ROMISH COMMUNION.

Yet *how much* the VERY BEING of CHRISTIANITY itself is concerned in THIS QUESTION, has *already* been shewn; and the

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OBSER-

\* Remarks on Observations, &c. p. 5.

† Observations on the Introd. Disc. &c. p. 5. 25.

OBSERVATOR HIMSELF, who cannot see this thing *here*, does yet in some other Places see it in so *terrible a Light*, that he *starts back* at it as it were with *Horror*. This will presently be shewn more *at large*; let us proceed to other Instances of HIERARCHICAL CRAFT.

The \* INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE, he says, advances *nothing* towards the GENERAL CONCLUSION, but leaves the Question *just* as it found it.

But if *this* Declaration be *sincere*, how shall we account for the *Conduct* of this GENTLEMAN and his FRATERNITY? What is the Reason of *that Inundation* of Pamphlets against a DISCOURSE, that *advances nothing*? Why is a WRITER, as yet *innocent*, to be *traduced* by INSINUATIONS, or *hunted down* by INVECTIVES? And why does THIS OBSERVATOR HIMSELF *break his Rest* to fight as it were *the Air*, and *level his Artillery* against a CHIMÆRA? Again,

The Author *just* mention'd † declares in *several Parts* of his BOOK, that if not so much as ONE TRUE MIRACLE could be found after the DAYS of the APOSTLES, the FOUNDATIONS of CHRISTIANITY would be *equally secure*.

*Another*

\* Remarks on Observations, &c. p. 5.

† Id. p. 8.



Another AUTHOR of the *same Stamp*, speaking of a PARTICULAR MIRACLE of the FIFTH CENTURY, says the *same thing*, when he affirms, that it \* *cannot be discredited without rejecting all Accounts of MIRACLES*, except THOSE of the SCRIPTURES.

✓ The READER will *excuse me* from shewing again the *Weakness* of these Declarations ; it has been repeated already *too often* ; and what I have *now* to do, is only to shew that they do not come *from the Heart* ; for which it might be sufficient to observe, that it is *not easy* for Men that are at *all vers'd* in ANTIQUITY, and are of *some Reputation* for Learning to be *so grossly* deceived in *so plain* a Point, and to be *so ignorant* of Consequences that lye *so open* to the most *incurious* and *superficial* EXAMINER. So that though THOSE GENTLEMEN may *not assume* to themselves any *great Merit* from my COMMENDATION, yet I must assure them that I have *too good* an Opinion of *their Sagacity* to imagine them in *Earnest*, and must compliment their *Parts* at the *Expence* of their *Sincerity*.

I am sensible indeed that *Parts* and *Sagacity* in some of THESE WRITERS are with many as *disputable* and *controverted* Qualities as *any* that belong to them. It is well therefore that they have *sav'd* me the Trouble

Trouble of bringing *Instances* of them from THEIR WRITINGS, by *tacking* about to their *true Interest*, and assuring us *themselves* that they know the DANGER *full well*.

Thus, Sir, Dr. M——n has before observed of ONE of THESE AUTHORS, that \* notwithstanding the *Declarations* above-mention'd, he is *perpetually insinuating* that the very Attempt to prove, what, when actually prov'd, he firms to be of no SIGNIFICANCY, is *dangerous* to the AUTHORITY OF THE GOSPEL, and sufficient to *alarm* all good Christians with the Apprehensions of its Consequences.

And of all the *other Advocates* of the PRIMITIVE MIRACLES he † observes, that they *cry out* with ONE VOICE, that he is *overthrowing* CHRISTIANITY ITSELF; and, whatever his Intention may be, he will *carry us* of course into POPERY or SCEPTICISM.

Dr. M——n calls this *Inconsistency*, and on that Supposition has *expos'd* it as it deserves. In *my humble* Opinion it deserves to be *expos'd* on *another Account*, and a *worse*. As one would scarce give *so mild* an *Appellation* to that Person's Conduct, who should endeavour to *impose* upon our Senses, by assuring us that one while a  
thing

\* Remarks on Observations, p. 8.

† Id. p. 9. — Defence of Dr. C——n's Charge. p. 46.

thing was *hot*, another while that it was *cold*, another while that it was *both*, and another while that it was *neither*.

The *Doct̃or* indeed has some Reason for being *merciful* *here*, and reserving his *keen-er sort* of Reproaches to a *fitter Occasion*. For he is in part *embark'd* with them in the *same Design*, and would have it thought as well as they, that the *most absurd* of all their Declarations *may* be true. But as *this is neither my Case nor yours*, let us see whether we cannot assign a *more probable Cause* of this Conduct, than *mere Inadvertency or Blunder*.

The *AUTHOR* of the *OBSERVATIONS* remarks towards the latter end with *wonderful Gravity and Circumspection*, that if you \* suppose the Fathers to be *hasty or credulous* in these Reports, it will come but to *little*; because they may yet *competently* serve for all the *Uses* for which<sup>o</sup> we want them; and let it be remember'd, that we want not *their Judgment*, but *their Integrity*. — But if it could be prov'd that the Fathers were *Impostors and Forgers of Lies*, the Consequences may go a great way. *yes: but not destroy*

In this Declaration he seems to express some sort of Apprehension, that the *former Part* of this Charge on the Fathers *may* be true, or at least that it *may* be made

\* *Observations on Introd. Discourse, &c.* p. 32.



made probable by *one* of *Dr. M——n's Talents*; so that it would be altogether proper to *secure a Retreat* betimes, and assure the World, that in case of a *Defeat* in one Part of his Forces, CHRISTIANITY and its INTERESTS were safe.

How indeed *this Retreat* is to be secured, and how a *suitable Provision* is to be made for it in the Concession above-mention'd, is not very easy for an *impartial By-stander* to tell. For if the Fathers are ever allow'd to be *so credulous* or *hasty* as to admit NO ONE MIRACLE but WHAT WAS FALSE, they might for the *same Reason* admit into the CANON OF SCRIPTURE NO ONE BOOK THAT WAS TRUE. And as there has already been shewn *an exact Similitude* between THESE WRITERS and the APOSTLES, if the Relations of *extraordinary Facts* in THE ONE are *universally to be rejected* on account of *any Defect* in their Evidence, we can hardly be brought to acquiesce in THE OTHER, which are liable to the *same Exception*. In short, it seems to be of *very little Consequence*, if the Testimony of THESE WRITERS is to be given up, to what it is owing; it may almost as well be IMPOSTURE as CREDULITY, and BOTH TOGETHER, as ANY ONE of them.

Our AUTHOR however does not *think so*, and I heartily wish him *good Luck* in the Management of this Point. I can assure him

him that he will *want it*, when it is searched to *the Bottom*. In the mean time it must be owned, that he behaves with *consummate Caution and Skill*; and that when even in *his own* Opinion Matters are COME TO EXTRBMITY, he is not *totally subdued*. If the FATHERS can be proved to be IMPOSTORS and FORGERS OF LIES, the Consequences may go a great way. How far, it may be *time enough* to explain, when things are come to a *Crisis*, and, in *his Expression*, INFIDELITY HAS DONE ITS WORST; while this is doing, he may make use of every possible Advantage, which either *Art* can find out or good *Fortune* throw in his Way; some *real Distinction* may be discovered, or some *imaginary one* invented; some *lucky Thought* may clear up Matters, or *some muddy one* embroil them. At the worst, it will be proper to observe, that *he* had bore his Testimony *long ago* both against the IMPORTANCE and INSIGNIFICANCY of Dr. M—'s SYSTEM, and had very *usefully and discreetly* contradicted himself on this *trying Occasion*.

And now may we not stand still and observe with the Poet, O WORLD THY SLIPPERY TURNS! or in Words *more proper* for the Occasion, O GUILE THY VARYING MASK! So *varying*, that though what has lately been advanced about *one of the clearest Points in Antiquity*, the DOUBLE DOCTRINE

TRINE of the HEATHEN PHILOSOPHERS, has hitherto been *peevishly* and *pertinaciously* deny'd; yet even SCEPTICISM ITSELF cannot dispute it with us *here*. At least it is a Key that is altogether as necessary to *unlock the bidden Treasures of the Moderns as their Predecessors*; and the *Obscurity* is cleared up, and the *Embarrass* removed by this Method almost as well in the ONE SET OF MEN AS THE OTHER.

Thus for instance, (as may be gather'd from the *foregoing Account*) the EXOTERIC DOCTRINE of Dr. M——n seems to be, that his *Hypothesis* is a *Defence* of the PROTESTANT RELIGION against the CATHOLIC; the ESOTERIC, that it is *subversive of both*: The EXOTERIC, that the *Disagreement* amongst Protestants about the Continuan-  
 ce of Miracles in the Christian Church is an Argument of *their Invalidity*: the ESOTERIC, that such a *Disagreement* is not a Proof of Falshood either in *this Point* or *any other*: The EXOTERIC, that an *Attachment to primitive Antiquity* disposes a Man to POPERY and DISAFFECTION: the ESOTERIC, that it has *no Connection* with *these bad Qualities* at all: The EXOTERIC, that such Men as press him with the *ill Aspect* his *Hypothesis* bears to Christianity, are INFIDELS in Disguise: the ESOTERIC, that they are ZEALOUS and RATIONAL CHRISTIANS.

Just the *same thing* may be observed of SOME OF HIS OPPOSERS; and they seem re-  
 solved



solved not to be *behind-band* with him in a point so necessary as *Hypocrisy* to their present Undertaking. Thus for instance, (as appears from what *has been already said*) the EXOTERIC DOCTRINE of these Gentlemen is, that the *Introduct. Discourse* is of no Significancy either to CATHOLICS or PROTESTANTS: the ESOTERIC, that it is of the *last Importance* to both: the EXOTERIC, that it advances *nothing*, but leaves things just as it found them: the ESOTERIC, that it has *already* made, and is like to make *frequent* and *dangerous Inroads* into the Hearts of Men: The EXOTERIC, that the *Miracles* of *Christ* and his *Apostles* are *safe*, though ALL since their Time are IMPOSTURE: the ESOTERIC, that there is a *strong* and *violent Presumption* that ALL of them must *stand* or *fall* together: The EXOTERIC, that the *Canon of Scripture* is *secure*, though the Doctor's SCHEME is admitted in its *utmost Extent*: the ESOTERIC, that on this Supposition we can never be *sure* either that the *Apostles* wrote their *Books*, nor distinguish them from *one another* if they did.

Thus far all is well; but so *exquisitely obscure* and *profound* are some of this latter SET OF MEN, that they *elude* the Power of the DOUBLE DOCTRINE ITSELF, and defy us even with this *Clue* to trace the *Mazes* of their Hearts. Like PLATO in his *exoteric Pieces*, with all his *future Transmigration*,

and *his Mire* ; they not only in the *same Book*, but the *same Breath* at once *alarm* and *pacify* us with frequent Intimations of REAL DANGER, and of NONE.

But it is high time to leave this *ambiguous* and *evasive* Manner of *descanting* upon ONE of the most *important Truths* in the World ; and as it is the *professed Design* of THIS TREATISE to bring both Parties to an *Eclaircissement*, I must in the next place intreat them to come to it, if *this* should fail. I must inform them that there are *Numbers* as well as *myself* that are not only *offended* with all the *idle* and *insignificant Parade* that has hitherto been made use of, but are *impatient* of having every thing relating to this Matter set in its *true* and *genuine* Light. I must inform them farther, that I am *commission'd* by THIS ASSEMBLY to make the *same Request* in their Name ; that our Principles and Studies are such as to make it *worth their while* to oblige us ; that we are in all Probability *better fitted* to form an *impartial* Judgment of their Proceedings, than the *Generality* of their Readers ; that we engage in this Dispute neither as CATHOLICS OF PROTESTANTS ; that we are of NO SECT, NO PARTY, NO ORDER OF PRIESTS, and NO FAVOURERS OF THEIR SYSTEMS ; that the *whole* of the Matter is, that we have yet *such a Portion* of true Religion left as to make us *sollicitous* about the  
Event

Event of the PRESENT QUESTION; and desirous of being inform'd by those who are set over us as SPIRITUAL GUIDES, whether we are any longer to be CHRISTIANS or NO.

But however the Gentlemen here call'd upon may act, whether they will prosecute *this Subject* in the Manner desir'd or not; it gives us a *very sensible* Satisfaction to see one so well dispos'd to it in You. It increases it to consider that as You've already hit upon the *true Method of Defence*, you can pursue it to the End either in the *Language* you now make use of, or *your own*. We look upon YOUR UNIVERSITY at present as the *great Field* from whence the WRITERS ON THIS SUBJECT are to proceed. Much has been said on it *lately* by ONE who seems to have THIS MATTER in his Power; but it is said in a Manner *so singular and uncommon*, with a Cast of Thought *so peculiar* to himself, and with *such a Mixture* of his new Project in almost every Page, that no \* *Millstone about its Neck* could more effectually contribute to sink the Work in my Opinion; and tho' I find no Reason either to condemn THIS WRITER'S *Intention*, or dispute his Skill; yet I can never be reconciled to such *Inventions in Religion*, as have hitherto escaped the Notice of every Christian in the World. In

\* A Phrase of Archbishop Tillotson's, which he apply'd to Popery not with greater Willingness, than I do it to this innovating Plan.



In truth there is always in such Cases a violent Suspicion that something is wrong; and if I had agreed with the AUTHOR OF THE OBSERVATIONS as well in other Sentiments as his Unwillingness to make what he calls \* EXPERIMENTS IN DIVINITY, the Subject of these Sheets would have been so much contracted, that they probably would never have made their Appearance in the World at all.

An Expression of Dr. St—g's  
We look upon your University as pre-  
sent as the great Light from whence the  
Writers on this Subject are to proceed.

Much has been said by one  
who seems to have this matter in his

power; but it is said in a manner so  
singular and uncommon, with a Call of  
Thought to himself, and with  
such a mixture of his own Power in it.

most every  
in West could not  
to find the West in my Opinion; and tho'  
I find no Reason either to condemn this  
Writer's Intention, or dispute his Skill;

yet I can never be reconciled to such In-  
consistency in Religion, as have hitherto con-  
fess'd the Justice of every Christian in the  
World.

A Friend of Archbishop Tillotson's, which he apply'd  
to Henry not with greater Willingness, than he it to the  
Innocent.

